



*12-foot deep excavation with nearly vertical excavation walls, no protective system and evidence of employee exposure.*

### General Trenching and Excavation Rules

- Trenches 5 feet (1.52 meters) deep or greater require a protective system unless the excavation is made entirely in stable rock.
- Keep heavy equipment away from trench edges.
- Keep surcharge loads at least 2 feet (0.6 meters) from trench edges.
- Know where underground utilities are located.
- Test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases.
- Inspect trenches at the start of each shift.
- Inspect trenches following a rainstorm.
- Do not work under raised loads, buckets or arms of equipment.
- Access and egress safely from excavations 4 feet or deeper using ladders, steps, ramps or other safe means ensuring these devices are within 25 feet of workers.

### Available Resources

The Excavation Standards as well as other information used in the development of this hazard alert can be accessed through the OSHA website: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

The OSH Division's Consultative Services Bureau provides free services to employers around the state. See the NCDOL website at [www.nclabor.com/osha/consult/consult.htm](http://www.nclabor.com/osha/consult/consult.htm) for information about this program and to download a request form.

### Disclaimer

*This industry alert provides general information about the main hazards associated with excavations. This document is not intended to be a substitute for the compliance with the requirements of the Excavation Standards or any other applicable OSH standard.*

NCDOL offers free training to employers on occupational safety and health standards. Copies of safety and health standards for 29 CFR 1910 (General Industry) and 29 CFR 1926 (Construction) are available from NCDOL/ETTA upon request. Publications can also be ordered online ([www.nclabor.com](http://www.nclabor.com)).

*For more information concerning education, training and interpretations of occupational safety and health standards contact:*

### Bureau of Education, Training and Technical Assistance

Fourth Floor, Old Revenue Building, Raleigh, N.C.  
Telephone: (919) 807-2875, Fax: (919) 807-2876

*For more information concerning occupational safety and health consultative services contact:*

### Bureau of Consultative Services

Third Floor, Old Revenue Building, Raleigh, N.C.  
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